(b) if so, the number of domestic as well as foreign tourists who came to see the Taj Mahal in the night during the last two years;

(c) whether the income has increased during last tw*o months by opening the Taj Mahal for night viewing; and

(d) if so, whether the number of tourists coming to see the Taj Mahal in the night can be increased and if so, by when it can be done?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATIRENUKACHOUDHURY): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be placed on the floor of the house.

Development of Buddhist Tourist Centres

†128. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of Buddhist tourists visit India; and

(b) if so, the scheme formulated by Government to develop places related to Mahatma Buddha for tourism purposes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKACHOUDHURY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Identification of places relating to Mahatma Buddha and their development for tourism purposes is a continuous process. Their development is undertaken under various schemes of Infrastructure Development of the Ministry of Tourism as well as through various externally aided projects through international funding agencies.

Boost to domestic tourism

129. SHRILALIT SURI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to give a boost to the domestic tourism for the year 2005, by providing low budget accommodation and travelling facilities to new destinations of varied interests;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details of new facilities proposed and new destinations identified for the purpose; and

(c) the extent to which domestic tourism is expected to increase and the funds earmarked by Government for the purpose during the year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATIRENUKACHOUDHURY): (a) to (c) In order to augfnenft>udget accommodation to give a boost to domestic tourism, the Ministry of Tourism has introduced a Scheme "Incentive to Accommodation infrastructure' during the 10th Five Year Plan. Under this scheme, capital subsidy is granted to new hotel projects in 1 to 3 star and Heritage Basic category in the country except the four metropolitan cities, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. An amount of Rs. 10 crore has been provided in the budget for the financial year 2004-05.

Further, there is a proposal with the Ministry of Railways to set up about 100 Railway Hotels/Yatri Niwas of 100 room capacity each at the surpus land available with them.

Development of new destinations including provision of various facilities is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments/Union Territories. However, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India provides Central financial assistance to the State Governments/Union Territories on the basis of specific proposals received from them under the schemes of Integrated Development of tourist Circuits, Destination Development Projects and Large Revenue Generating Projects.

As per the statistics available in* the Ministry of Tourism, the number of domestic tourists which was about 270 million during the year 2002 has gone up to 309 million in the year 203, representing an increase of about 14%. This trend is Dkely to continue during the current year.

Tourism in Tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu

130. SHRI G.K. VASAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether tourism has been affected in Tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu;